

## The story of the Black Hawk War /

### THE STORY OF THE BLACK HAWK WAR.<sup>1</sup> BY THE EDITOR. R. G. Thwaites.

<sup>1</sup> The following authorities have been consulted, in addition to numerous biographies, newspaper files, manuscript letters, journals, and reports in the possession of the Wisconsin Historical Society: Drake's *The Great Indian Chief of the West; or, Life and Adventures of Black Hawk* (Cincinnati. 1854. published anonymously); Wakefield's *History of the War between the United States and the Sac and Fox Nations of Indians* (Jacksonville, Ill., 1834); *Life of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, or Black Hawk, dictated by himself* (Boston. 1834)—this account purports to have been dictated by the chief to Antoine le Claire (half-breed), United States interpreter for the Sacs and Foxes. in August, 1888, and afterward edited and published by J. B. Patterson, and is dedicated by Black Hawk himself to Gen. Henry Atkinson; second edition of the foregoing, with appendix giving an account of the death and burial of Black Hawk (St. Louis, 1882); Governor Reynolds's *Pioneer History of Illinois* (2d ed., Chicago, 1887), and his *My Own Times* (2d ed., Chicago, 1879); Governor Ford's *History of Illinois* (Chicago, 1854); Davidson and Stuvé's *Complete History of Illinois* (Springfield, Ill., 1874); Moses's *Illinois, Historical and Statistical* (vol. i., Chicago, 1889); Blanchard's *History of Illinois, with Historical Map* (Chicago, 1888); Armstrong's *The Sauks and the Black Hawk War* (Springfield, Ill., 1887); and the *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vols. i–xi.

### The First Campaign .

Although many of its incidents were paltry enough, few events in the early history of the Northwest were as picturesque, as tragical, or as fraught with weighty consequence, as the Black Hawk War. Certainly none have been so persistently misrepresented for partisan purposes. Immediately after the close of the war, numerous persons who had served with the army hastened to record their impressions in the frontier newspapers and

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in book form. These publications seem chiefly to have been designed as electioneering documents to “boom” the war records of certain of 218 the officials engaged in the service, and correspondingly to belittle the deeds of others. This gave rise to acrimonious controversies, continuing through a score or more of years, conducted through the mediums of published documentary collections, speeches, newspapers, and unpublished letters. Even at this late day a few well-preserved Black Hawk veterans are still living, who occasionally address pioneer gatherings and dictate reminiscences for the press, which are well-intentioned enough but must be taken with a grain of allowance, for they smack of the partisan predilections of a half century ago. As the result of these prejudiced accounts, there have been developed in the public mind vague and in a great measure incorrect notions of the war, its causes, its incidents, and the relative merits of its chief participants. It is the attempt of this paper to dispel, if may be, some of these errors by presenting a sketch of the famous uprising, in the preparation of which partisan sympathy has not entered, the truth alone being sought from original sources.

On the third of November, 1804, the United States government concluded a treaty with the Sac and Fox Indians, by which, mainly for the paltry annuity of one thousand dollars. the confederacy ceded to the whites fifty million acres of land, comprising in general terms the eastern third of the present state of Missouri, and the territory lying between the Wisconsin river on the north, the Fox river of the Illinois on the east. the Illinois on the southeast, and the Mississippi on the west. There was an unfortunate clause in this compact—article 7—which became one of the chief causes of the Black Hawk War. Instead of obliging the Indians at once to vacate the ceded territory, it was stipulated that, “as long as the lands which are now ceded to the United States remain their property”—that is to say, public land—“the Indians belonging to the said tribes shall enjoy the privilege of living or hunting upon them.”<sup>1</sup>

1 *Treaties between the United States of America and the several Indian tribes* (Wash., 1887), p. 109.

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Within the limits of the cession was the chief seat of Sac 219 power<sup>1</sup> —a village lying on the north side of Rock river, three miles above its mouth and the same distance south of Rock island, in the Mississippi. It was picturesquely situated, contained the principal cemetery of the nation, and was populated by about five hundred families, being one of the largest Indian towns on the continent. The soil there was alluvial in its composition, producing enormous crops of corn and pumpkins, and the aboriginal villagers took great pride in a rudely-cultivated tract some three thousand acres in extent, lying north of the town and parallel with the Mississippi river.

1 The allied Sacs and Foxes had from the middle of the eighteenth century, occupied the banks of the Mississippi, between the mouths of the Missouri and the Wisconsin. The confederation, in times of peace, was more nominal than real. There was much jealous bickering between the tribes. In general, the Foxes, who occupied the west bank, and were the smallest tribe numerically, were more conciliatory toward the whites than were the Sacs, who dwelt chiefly along the east bank.

From the beginning of the present century the principal character in this village was Makataimeshekiakiak, or the Black Sparrow Hawk—commonly styled Black Hawk. Born at the Sac village in 1767, he was neither an hereditary nor an elected chief, but was by common consent the leader of his village. Although not possessed of superior physical, moral, or intellectual endowments, the force of circumstances caused him to become a national celebrity in his own day and a conspicuous figure in western history for all time. He was a restless, ambitious savage, possessed of some of the qualities of successful leadership, but without the capacity to attain the highest honors in the Sac and Fox confederacy. He early became a malcontent, jealous of Keokuk, Wapello, Morgan, and the other constituted chiefs, continually sought excuses for openly differing with them on questions of policy, and in council arrayed his followers against them. He was much of a demagogue, and aroused the passions of his people by appeals to their prejudices and superstitions. It is probable that he was never, in the exercise of this policy,

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dishonest in his motives. Doubtless he was sincere in the opinions he 220 championed. But he was easily influenced by the British military and commercial agents,—who were continually engaged, previous to the war of 1812–15, in cultivating a spirit of hostility between the Northwestern tribes and the Americans,—and was led by them always to consider himself under the special protection of the “British father” (general military agent) at Malden.<sup>1</sup> A too-confiding disposition was ever leading his judgment astray. He was readily duped by those who white or red, were interested in deceiving him. The effect of his daily communication with the Americans was to often rudely shock his high sense of honor, while the uniform courtesy of the treatment accorded him upon his annual begging visit to Malden, contrasted strangely, in his eyes, with his experiences with many of the inhabitants on the Illinois border.

<sup>1</sup> *In his Autobiography*,—probably authentic in the main, but written in a stilted style which we doubtless owe to the editor, Patterson,—Black Hawk calls the president at Washington his “great father.” and the agent at Malden his “British father.” *Ford*. p. 110. *note*, questions the accuracy of the autobiography: he says that “Black Hawk knew little, if anything, about it;” that it “was written by a printer, and was never intended for anything but a catch penny publication.” and that it is a “gross perversion of facts.” Later historians, not as strong Indian-haters as Ford, have taken a more favorable view of the book. My references in this paper are to the original edition of 1834.

Black Hawk was about five feet, four or five inches in height, and rather spare as to flesh; his somewhat pinched features exaggerated the prominence of the cheek-bones of his race: he had a full mouth, inclined to be somewhat open when at rest; a pronounced Roman nose; fine “piercing” eyes, often beaming with a kindly and always with a thoughtful expression; no eyebrows; a high, full forehead; a head well thrown back. with a pose of quiet dignity, and his hair plucked out, with the exception of the scalp-lock, in which, on ceremonial occasions, was fastened a bunch of eagle feathers.<sup>2</sup> The conservative braves of the confederacy, who were friendly to the Americans, regarded the

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2 An admirable original portrait of Black Hawk, by R. M. Sully, painted in 1833 while the subject was a prisoner at Fortress Monroe, hangs in the portrait gallery of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

221 Hawk with kindly compassion. He was thought by them to be misguided, to be the credulous catspaw for others, but his sincerity was not often doubted. His own followers, who, from the closeness of their intercourse with the Canadian authorities, were known as “the British band,” appear as a rule to have held him in the highest regard.<sup>1</sup>

1 See Reynolds's *My Own Times*, p. 204, for his estimate of Black Hawk. *Ford*, who himself served in the Black Hawk War, says, p. 109. “Black Hawk was distinguished for courage, and for clemency to the vanquished. He was an Indian patriot, a kind husband and father, and was noted for his integrity in all his dealings with his tribe and with the Indian traders. He was firmly attached to the British, and cordially hated the Americans.”

At the outbreak of hostilities between Great Britain and the United States, in 1812, Black Hawk naturally sided with Tecumseh and the British, and, accompanied by a band of two hundred Sac braves, served under the great Shawanee chief until the death of the latter at the battle of the Thames, October 5, 1813.<sup>2</sup> Black Hawk—who had, in company with the Pottawatomie chiefs, Shaubena and Billy Caldwell, been near to Tecumseh when he fell—at once hurried home. He would, he tells us in his autobiography, have remained quiet thereafter, until the close of the war, but for a fatal injury which had during his absence been inflicted by a party of white ruffians upon an aged friend whom he had left behind at the village. In consequence of this outrage, it was the thirteenth of May, 1816—nearly eighteen months after the signing of the treaty of Ghent—before the British band of the Sacs could be induced to cease their retaliatory border forays along the upper Mississippi and sign a treaty of peace with the United States.

2 See Cruikshank, on Black Hawk's record in the war of 1812–15, *ante*, pp, 141, 142.

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After burying the hatchet, Black Hawk settled down into the customary routine of savage life—hunting in winter, loafing about his village in summer, improvidently existing from hand to mouth though surrounded by abundance, and occasionally varying the monotony by visits to Maiden, from whence he would return laden with provisions, arms, ammunition, and trinkets, his stock of vanity increased by wily flattery and his bitterness against the Americans correspondingly intensified. It is not at all surprising that he should have hated the Americans. They brought him nought but evil. The even tenor of his life was continually being disturbed by them, and a cruel and causeless beating which some white settlers gave him in the winter of 1822–23 was an insult which he treasured up against the entire American people.

In the summer of 1823, squatters, covetous of the rich fields cultivated by the British band, began to take possession of them. The treaty of 1804 had guaranteed to the Indians the use of the ceded territory so long as the lands remained the property of the United States and were not sold to individuals. The frontier line of homestead settlement was still fifty or sixty miles to the east; the country between had not yet been surveyed, and much of it not explored; the squatters had no rights in this territory, and it was clearly the duty of the general government to protect the Indians within it so long as no sales were made. The Sacs would not have complained had the squatters settled in other portions of the tract, and not sought to steal the village which was their birthplace and contained the cemetery of their tribe.<sup>1</sup> These were outrages of the most flagrant nature. Indian cornfields were fenced in by the intruders, squaws and children were whipped for venturing beyond the bounds thus set, lodges were burned over the heads of the occupants. A reign of terror ensued, in which the frequent remonstrances of Black Hawk to the white authorities were in vain. The evil grew worse year by year. When the Indians returned each spring from their winter's hunt they found their village more of a wreck than when they had left it in the fall. It is surprising that they acted so peacefully while the victims of such harsh treatment.

1 “I had an interview with Keokuk [head chief of the confederacy], to see if this difficulty could not be settled with our Great Father. and told him to propose to give any other land that our Great Father might choose, even our lead mines, to be peaceably permitted to keep the small point of land on which our village was situated. \* \* \* Keokuk promises to make an exchange if possible.”— *Autobiography*, pp. 85, 86.

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Keokuk and the United States Indian agent at Fort Armstrong—which had been built on Rock island about 1816—continually advised peaceful retreat across the Mississippi. But Black Hawk was stubborn as well as romantic, and his people stood by him when he appealed to their love of home and veneration for the graves of their kindred. He now began to claim that the Sac and Fox representatives to the council which negotiated the treaty of 1804 never consented that the land on which Black Hawk's village stood should be the property of the United States.<sup>1</sup> This was the weak point in his position. At every treaty to which he had “touched the quill” since that date he had, with the rest of his nation, solemnly re-affirmed the integrity of the compact of 1804; that he understood the nature of its provisions there is no reason to doubt. But this fact he now conveniently ignored.<sup>2</sup> His present views were endorsed by the mischief-making British agent at Malden, by the Winnebago prophet, and by others of his advisers. All of these told him that if it were true the government had not yet bought the site of his village, to hold fast to it and the United States would not venture to remove him by force.<sup>3</sup>

1 “After questioning Quashquame [one of the signers of the treaty of 1804] about the sale of the lands, he assured me that he never had consented to the sale of our village.”— *Ibid.*, p. 85. Yet Quashquame had signed the treaties of Portage des Sioux (Sept. 13, 1815), and St. Louis (Sept. 3, 1822), wherein the treaty of 1804 was explicitly re-affirmed.

2 Black Hawk signed the treaties of St. Louis (May 13, 1816), St. Louis (Sept. 3, 1822), and Prairie du Chien (Aug. 19, 1825), each of which reaffirmed the treaty of 1804.

3 Black Hawk was easily satisfied with an equivocal reply: "I heard that there was a great chief on the Wabash, and sent a party to get his advice. They informed him that we had not sold our village. He assured them, then, that if we had not sold the land on which our village stood, our Great Father would not take it from us. I started early to Maiden to see the chief of my British Father, and told him my story. He gave the same reply that the chief on the Wabash had given. \* \* \* I next called on the great chief at Detroit, and made the same statement to him that I had to the chief of our British Father. He gave me the same reply. \* \* \* This assured me that I was right, and determined me to hold out, as I had promised our people."— *Autobiography*, pp. 94, 95.

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White Cloud, the prophet, was Black Hawk's evil genius. He was a shrewd, crafty Indian, half Winnebago and half Sac, possessing much influence over both nations from his assumption of sacred talents, and was at the head of a Winnebago village some thirty-five miles above the mouth of the Rock. He had many traits of character similar to those possessed by Tecumseh's brother, but in a less degree. His hatred of the whites was inveterate; he appears to have been devoid of humane sentiments; he had a reckless disposition, and seemed to enjoy sowing the seeds of disorder for the simple pleasure of witnessing a border chaos. He was about forty years of age when his sinister agitation bore fruit; was nearly six feet in height, stout and athletic; had a large, broad face; a short, blunt nose; full eyes, large mouth, thick lips, a full head of shaggy hair, and his general appearance indicated deliberate, self-contented savagery. In council the prophet displayed much zeal and persuasive oratory. In the matter of dress he must at times have been picturesque. An eye-witness, who was in attendance on a Pottawattomie council wherein the prophet was urging the cause of Black Hawk, describes the wizard as dressed in a faultless white buckskin suit, fringed at the seams: wearing a towering head-dress of the same material, capped with a bunch of fine eagle feathers; each ankle girt with a wreath of small sleigh-bells which jingled at every step, while in his nose and ears were ponderous



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gold rings gently tinkling one against the other as he shook his ponderous head in the warmth of harangue.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The name of the prophet, in the Winnebago tongue, was Waubakeeshik, meaning “white eye,” having reference to the fact that one of his pupils was without color. Pioneers now living, who remember the prophet, differ in opinion as to whether he was totally blind in that organ. He died among the Winnebagos in 1840 or 1841.

In the spring of 1830 Black Hawk and his band returned from an unsuccessful hunt to find their town almost completely shattered, many of the graves plowed over, and the whites more abusive than ever. During the winter the squatters, who had been seven years illegally upon the ground, had finally preëmpted a few quarter-sections of 225 land at the mouth of the Rock, so selected as to cover the village site and the Sac cornfields. This was clearly a trick to accord with the letter but to violate the spirit of the treaty of 1804. There was still a belt, fifty miles wide, of practically-unoccupied territory to the east of the village, and no necessity for disturbing the Sacs in the natural progress of settlement for several years to come.

The indignant Black Hawk at once proceeded to Malden, to pour his sorrows into the ears of his “British father.” Here he received additional assurance of the justice of his cause, and upon his return visited the prophet, at whose village he met some of the Pottawatomies and Winnebagoes, who also gave him words of encouragement.

When, therefore, he returned to his village in the spring of 1831, after another gloomy and profitless winter's hunt, and was fiercely warned away by the whites, he, in a firm and dignified manner, notified the settlers that, if they did not themselves remove, he should use force. He informs the readers of his autobiography that he did not mean bloodshed but simply muscular eviction.<sup>1</sup> His announcement was construed by the whites, however, as a threat against their lives; and petitions and messages were showered in

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by them upon Governor John Reynolds, of Illinois, setting forth the situation in terms of exaggeration that 15

1 “The white people brought whiskey into our village, made our people drunk, and cheated them out of their homes, guns and traps. This fraudulent system was carried to such an extent that I apprehended serious difficulties might take place unless a stop was put to it. Consequently I visited all the whites and begged them not to sell whiskey to my people. One of them continued the practice openly. I took a party of my young men, went to his home, and took his barrel and broke in the head and turned out the whiskey. I did this for fear some of the whites might be killed by my people when drunk.”— *Autobiography*, p. 89.

“I now determined to put a stop to it, by clearing our country of the intruders. I went to the principal men and told them that they must and should leave our country, and gave them until the middle of the next day to remove in. The worst left within the time appointed,—but the one who remained represented that his family (which was large) would be in a starving condition if he went and left his crop, and promised to behave well if I would consent to let him remain until fall in order to secure his crop. He spoke reasonably, and I consented.”— *Ibid.*, p. 101.

226 would be amusing were it not that they were the prelude to one of the darkest tragedies in the history of our western border. The governor caught the spirit of the occasion and at once issued a flaming proclamation calling out a mounted volunteer force to “repel the invasion of the British band.” These volunteers, sixteen hundred strong, co-operated with ten companies of regulars under General Edmund P. Gaines, the commander of the western division of the army, in a demonstration before Black Hawk's village on the twenty-fifth of June.<sup>1</sup>

1 “It is astonishing, the war-spirit the western people possess. As soon as I decided to march against the Indians at Rock Island, the whole country, throughout the northwest of the state, resounded with the war clamor. Everything was in a bustle and uproar. It was then eighteen or twenty years since the war with Great Britain and these same Indians,

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and the old citizens inflamed the young men to appear in the tented field against the old enemy.”—Reynolds's *My Own Times*, p. 209.

During that night the Indians, in the face of this superior force, quietly withdrew to the west bank of the Mississippi, where they had previously been ordered. On the thirtieth they signed a treaty of capitulation and peace, with General Gaines and Governor Reynolds, solemnly agreeing never to return to the east side of the river without express permission of the United States government.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See full text of treaty.— *Ibid.*, pp. 218, 219.

The rest of the summer was spent by the evicted savages in a state of misery. It being now too late to raise another crop of corn and beans, they suffered much for the actual necessities of life.

Another difficulty soon arose. The previous year (1830), a party of Menomonees and Sioux had murdered some of the British band. A few weeks after the removal, Black Hawk and a large war party of the Sacs ascended the river and, in retaliation, massacred, scalped, and fearfully mutilated every member but one of a party of twenty-eight Menomonees who were encamped on an island nearly opposite Fort Crawford, at Prairie du Chien. General Joseph Street, the Indian agent at that post, on the complaint of the Menomonees, demanded that the Sac murderers be delivered 227 to him for trial, under existing treaty provisions. As none of the Menomonees who had murdered his people had been given up, and his foray was, according to the rules of savage warfare, one of just reprisal, Black Hawk declined to accede, thereby clearly rebelling against the United States government through its Indian department.

Neapope, who was the second in command of the British band, had, prior to the eviction, gone upon a visit to Malden, and returned to his chief in the fall, by the way of the prophet's town, with glowing reports of proffered aid from the British, the Winnebagoes, Ottawas, Chippewas; and the Pottawatomies, in the regaining of the village.<sup>1</sup> Neapope,

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who was possessed of much military genius, was an ardent disciple of the prophet, as well as a reckless mischief-maker on his own account.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “He (Neapope) informed me, privately, that the prophet was anxious to see me, as he had much good news to tell me. and that I would hear good news in the spring from our British father. ‘The prophet requested me to inform you of all the particulars. I would much rather, however, you should see him, and learn all from himself. But I will tell you, that he has received expresses from our British father, who says that he is going to send us guns, ammunition, provisions, and clothing, early in the spring. The vessels that bring them will come by way of Mil-wa-ke. The prophet has likewise received wampum and tobacco from the different nations on the lakes—Ottawas, Chippewas; Pottawattomies; and as for the Winnebagoes, he has them all at his command. We are going to be happy once more.’”—*Autobiography*, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Neapope (pronounced *Nah-pope*) means “soup.” He was regarded as something of a curiosity among his fellows, because he used neither whisky nor tobacco. Being a “medicine man,” he was in demand at feasts and councils as an agency through which “talks” could be had direct with the Great Spirit. He had the reputation of being better versed in the Sac traditions than any other member of the tribe. His history after the close of the Black Hawk War is unknown.

The advice of White Cloud was, that Black Hawk should proceed to the prophet's town the following spring and raise a crop of corn, assurances being given him that by autumn the alleged allies would be ready to join the Sac leader in a general movement against the whites in the valley of the Rock.

Relying upon these rose-colored representations, Black Hawk spent the winter on the then deserted site of old Fort Madison, on the west bank of the Mississippi, near the mouth of the Des Moines, engaged in quietly recruiting his band. The urgent protests of Keokuk, who feared that the entire Sac and Fox confederacy would become implicated in the war

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for which the Hawk seemed to be preparing, but spurred the jealous and obstinate partisan to renewed endeavors.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Keokuk, who has a smooth tongue and is a great speaker, was busy in persuading my band that I was wrong, and thereby making many of them dissatisfied with me. I had one consolation, for all the women were on my side, on account of their cornfields.”—*Autobiography*, p. 98.

At this period the territory embraced in the Sac and Fox cession of 1804 was an almost unbroken wilderness of alternating prairies, oak groves, rivers, and marshes. The United States government had not surveyed any portion of it, nor had it been much explored by white hunters or pioneers, while the Indians themselves were acquainted with but narrow belts of country along their accustomed trails. In the lead regions about Galena and Mineral Point, there were a few trading posts and small mining settlements. An Indian trail along the east bank of the Mississippi connected Galena and Fort Armstrong, on Rock island. A coach road, known as “Kellogg's trail,” opened in 1827, connected Galena with Peoria and the settlements in southern and eastern Illinois. A daily mail coach traveled this, the only wagon road north of the IllinOis river, and it was often crowded with people going to and from the mines, which were the chief source of wealth for the northern pioneers. Here and there along this road lived a few people engaged in entertaining travelers and keeping stage teams—“Old Man” Kellogg, at Kellogg's grove; a Mr. Winter, on Apple river; John Dixon, at Dixon's ferry, on Rock river; “Dad Joe,” at Dad Joe's grove; Henry Thomas, on West Bureau creek; Charles S. Boyd, at Boyd's grove, and two or three others of less note. Indian trails traversed the country in many directions, between the villages of the several bands and their hunting and fishing grounds, and they were used as public thoroughfares by 229 whites and reds alike.<sup>1</sup> One of these connected Galena with Chicago, by the way of Big Foot's Pottawattomie village, at the head of the body of water now known as Lake Geneva. There was another, but slightly traversed, between Dixon's and Chicago. The mining settlements were also connected by old and new trails, and two well-traveled ways led respectively to Fort Winnebago, at the portage of the Fox

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and Wisconsin rivers, and to Fort Howard, on the lower Fox. In Illinois, the most important aboriginal highway was the great Sac trail, extending in almost an airline across the state from Black Hawk's village to the south shore of Lake Michigan, and thence to Malden; over this deep-beaten path the British band made their frequent pilgrimages to the British agency.

1 See *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, xi., p. 230, on the evolution of highways from Indian trails.

Between Galena and the Illinois river, the largest settlement was on Bureau creek, where some thirty families were gathered. Small aggregations of cabins were to be found at Peru, La Salle, South Ottawa, Newark, Holderman's grove, and a little cluster of eight or ten on Indian creek. The lead-mining colonies in Michigan Territory (now Wisconsin) were chiefly clustered about Mineral Point and Dodgeville.<sup>2</sup> At the mouth of Milwaukee river, on Lake Michigan, Solomon Juneau was still monarch of all he surveyed, while at Chicago there was a population of but two or three hundred, housed in primitive abodes nestled under the shelter of Fort Dearborn. Scattered between these settlements were a few widely-separated farms, managed in a crude, haphazard fashion; squatters were more numerous than homesteaders, and at best very little attention was paid to metes and bounds.

2 See map of lead mines in 1829, *Ibid.*, p. 400.

The settlers were chiefly hardy backwoodsmen who had graduated from the Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana clearings, and come west to better their fortunes, or because neighbors were getting too numerous. They were very poor, owning but little more than their cabins, the scanty clothing they wore, a few rough tools, teams of 230 "scrub" horses or yokes of cattle, and some barnyard stock. They were, for the most part, in the prime of life, enterprising, bold, daring, skilled marksmen, and accustomed to exposure, privations and danger. There were no schools, and the only religious instruction received by these rude pioneers was that given by adventurous missionaries who penetrated these

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wildernesses with the self-sacrificing energies of the fathers of the church, making up in zeal what they lacked in culture.

But upon the heels of these worthies had come thieves, counterfeiters, cut-throats, social outlaws from the east. By nature aggressive, they too often gave to the community a character of wild and lawless adventure. Such men are always upon the frontiers of civilization, and the Indians, from being more frequently brought into collision with these than with the more conservative majority, are apt naturally to form an opinion of our race that is far from flattering.<sup>1</sup>

1 Nicolay and Hay, in their *Abraham Lincoln—A History*, i., chaps. ii. and iii., give a graphic picture of pioneer life in Illinois in 1830; but their account of the Black Hawk War, *Ibid.*, chap. v., unfortunately contains numerous errors.

Conditions in Illinois were ripe for an Indian war. Many elements in the white population saw benefits to be derived from it. It would give occupation to the small but noisy class of pioneer loafers, and cause government money to circulate freely; to the numerous and respectable body of Indian-haters—persons who bad at some time suffered in person or property from the red savages, and had come to regard them as little better than wild beasts—it offered a chance for reprisal; to the political aspirant, a brilliant foray presented opportunities for the achievement of personal popularity, and indeed the Black Hawk War was long the chief stock in trade of many a subsequent statesman; while to persons fond of mere adventure, always a large element on the border, it presented superior attractions.

On the sixth of April, 1832, Black Hawk and Neapope, with about five hundred warriors (chiefly Sacs), their squaws and children, and all their belongings, crossed the Mississippi 231 at the Yellow Banks, below the mouth of the Rock, and invaded the state of Illinois. The results of the Hawk's negotiations during the winter, with the Winnebagoes and the Pottawattomies, had not been of an encouraging nature; he now suspected that the representations of the prophet and Neapope were exaggerated, and his advance up

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the west bank of the Mississippi, from Fort Madison, was accordingly made with some forebodings; but the prophet met him at the Yellow Banks and gave him such positive reassurances of ultimate success, that the misguided Sac confidently and leisurely continued his journey.<sup>1</sup> He proceeded up the east bank of the Rock as far as the prophet's town—some four hundred and fifty of his braves being well mounted, while the others, with the women, children, and their equipage, remained in the canoes. The intention of the invaders was, as before stated, to raise a crop with the Rock-river Winnebagoes at or immediately above the prophet's town, and prepare for the war-path in the fall, when there would be a supply of provisions. The travelling was so beset by difficulties, heavy rains having made the stream turbulent and the wide river bottoms swampy, that the band was twenty days in covering the intervening forty miles.

<sup>1</sup> “The prophet then addressed my braves and warriors. He told them to follow us, and act like braves and we had nothing to fear, but much to gain. That the American war chief might come, but would not, nor dare not, interfere with us so long as we acted preceably. That we were not yet ready to act other wise. We must wait until we ascend Rock river and receive our reinforcements, and we will then be able to withstand any army!”—*Autobiography*, p. 113.

Immediately upon crossing the Mississippi, Black Hawk had dispatched messengers to the Pottawattomies, asking them to meet him in council of war on Sycamore creek (now Stillman's run), opposite the present site of Byron. The Pottawattomies were much divided in opinion as to the proper course to pursue. Shaubena, a Pottawattomie chief of much ability, who had formed a sincere respect and attachment for the whites since the war of 1812–15, succeeded in inducing the majority of the braves at least to remain neutral; but the hot-heads, under Big Foot and a despicable half-breed British agent, Mike Girty, were fierce for 232 taking the war-path. Shaubena, after quieting the passions of his followers, set out at once to make a rapid tour of the settlements in the Illinois and Rock valleys,



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carrying the first tidings of approaching war to the pioneers, even extending his mission as far east as Chicago.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Matson's *Memories of Shaubena* (Chicago, 1880).

General Henry Atkinson<sup>2</sup> had arrived at Fort Armstrong early in the spring, in charge of a company of regulars, for the purpose of enforcing the demand of the Indian department for the Sac murderers of the Menomonees. He did not learn of the invasion until the thirteenth of April, seven days afterwards, but at once notified Governor Reynolds that his own force was too small for the emergency and a large detachment of militia was essential. The governor immediately issued another fiery proclamation (April 16, 1832), calling for a special levy of mounted volunteers to assemble at Beardstown, on the lower Illinois river, on the twenty-second of the month.

<sup>2</sup> The Indians called him "White Beaver."

The news spread like wild-fire. Some of the settlers fled from the country in hot haste, never to return; but the majority of those who did not join the state troops hastened into the larger settlements or to other points convenient for assembly, where rude stockade forts were built, the inhabitants forming themselves into little garrisons, with officers and some degree of military discipline. The following named forts figured more or less conspicuously in the ensuing troubles:

In Illinois —Galena, Apple River, Kellogg's Grove, Buffalo Grove, Dixon's, South Ottawa, Wilburn (nearly opposite the present city of Peru). West Bureau, Hennepin, and Clark (at Peoria).

In Michigan Territory (now south western Wisconsin)—Union (Dodge's smelting works, near Dodgeville), Defiance (Parkinson's farm, five miles southeast of Mineral Point), Hamilton (William S. Hamilton's smelting works, now Wiota), Jackson (at Mineral Point), Blue Mounds (one and a half miles south of East Blue Mound), Pariah's (at Thomas J.

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Pariah's smelting works, now Wingville), Cassville, Platteville, Gratiot's Grove, Diamond Grove, White Oak Springs, Old Shullsburg, and Elk Grove.

Fort ArmsTrong was soon a busy scene of preparation. St. Louis was at the time the only government supply depot 233 on the upper Mississippi; and limited transportation facilities, and the bad weather incident to a backward spring, greatly hampered the work of collecting troops, stores, boats, and camp equipage. General Atkinson, however, was energetic and possessed of much executive ability, and overcame these difficulties as rapidly as possible. He had military skill, courage, perseverance, and knowledge of Indian character, and during his preparations for the campaign took pains personally to assure himself of the peaceful attitude of those Sacs and Foxes not members of the British band. He also sent two sets of messengers to Black Hawk, ordering him to withdraw at once to the west bank of the river. on the peril of being driven there by force of arms. To both messages, the Sac leader, now blindly trusting in the prophet, sent defiant answers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Another express came from the White Beaver [Atkinson], threatening to pursue us and drive us back, if we did not return peaceably. This message roused the spirit of my band, and all were determined to remain with me and contest the ground with the war chief, should he come and attempt to drive us. We therefore directed the express to say to the war chief, 'If he wished to fight us. he might come on!' We were determined never to be driven, and equally so, not to make the first attack, our object being to act only on the defensive."— *Autobiography*, p. 114.

*Wakefield*, pp. 10–12, gives an interesting and graphic report of a visit to Black Hawk's camp at the prophet's town, made April 25–27, by Henry Gratiot, Indian agent for the Rook-river band of Winnebagoes. Gratiot bore one of the messages from Atkinson, which Black Hawk declined to receive. See *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, ii., p. 836; x., pp. 235, 498, for details of this mission, and sketch of Gratiot.

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Meanwhile volunteers had been easily recruited amid the general excitement, and rendezvoused at Beardstown. They were organized into four regiments, under the commands respectively of Colonels John Thomas, Jacob Fry, Abraham B. Dewitt, and Samuel M. Thompson; a spy (or scout) battalion under Major James D. Henry; and two “odd battalions” under Majors Thomas James and Thomas Long.<sup>2</sup> The entire force, some sixteen hundred strong—all

<sup>2</sup> See roster in Armstrong, appendix. Abraham Lincoln, afterwards president of the United States, was captain of a company in the Fourth (Thompson's) regiment. Wakefield, the historian, served in Henry's spy battalion. Jefferson Davis, later president of the Confederacy, was a lieutenant of Co. B., First United States infantry, which was stationed at Fort Crawford (Prairie du Chien) during January and February, 1832, but Davis himself is on the rolls as “absent on detached service at the Dubuque mines by order of Colonel Morgan.” He was absent from his company on furlough, from March 26 to August 18, 1832; hence, it would appear from the records that he took no part in the Black Hawk War further than to escort the chief to Jefferson Barracks. Nevertheless, an anonymous campaign biography of Davis. published at Jackson. Miss., 1851, in the interest of his candidacy for the governorship, and presumably inspired by the candidate himself, says that he “earned his full share of the glories, by partaking of the dangers and hardships of the campaign. Here he remained in the active discharge of his duties, and participating in most of the skirmishes and battles, until shortly after the battle of Bad Axe.”

234 horsemen except three hundred who had been enlisted as infantry, by mistake—was placed under the charge of Brigadier-General Samuel Whiteside, who had previous to this been in the command of frontier rangers and enjoyed the reputation of being a good Indian fighter. Accompanied by Governor Reynolds, the brigade proceeded to Fort Armstrong, which was reached on the seventh of May, and the volunteers were at once sworn into the United States service by General Atkinson. The governor, who remained with his troops, was recognized and paid as a major-general; while Lieutenant Robert Anderson (later of

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Fort Sumter fame) was detailed from the regulars to be inspector-general of the Illinois militia.

On the ninth, the start was made, Black Hawk's trail up the east bank of the Rock being pursued by Whiteside and the mounted volunteers. Atkinson followed in boats with cannon, provisions, and the bulk of the baggage; with him were the three hundred volunteer footmen and four hundred regular infantry, the latter gathered from Forts Crawford (Prairie du Chien) and Leavenworth, and under the command of Colonel Zachary Taylor, afterwards president of the United States.<sup>1</sup> The rest of the baggage was taken by Whiteside's land force in wagons. The traveling was bad for both divisions. The heavy rains had made the stream

<sup>1</sup> Major William S. Harney, the hero of Cerro Gordo, also served with the regulars, in this campaign.

235 turbulent, and the men frequently waded breast deep for hours together, pushing the keel and Mackinaw boats against the rapid current and lifting them over the rapids; while in the swamps along the trail the baggage wagons were often mired, and the horsemen obliged to do rough service in pushing and hauling freight through and over the black muck and tangled roots. For many days the troops had not a dry thread upon them, and the tents were found to be of poor quality and but meagre protection from the driving storms on the Illinois prairies.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A great portion of the volunteers had been raised in the backwoods and rafting and swimming streams were familiar to them.—Reynolds's *My Own Times*, p. 226.

Whiteside was enabled to out distance Atkinson. Arriving at the prophet's town he found it deserted and the trail up the river fresh, so he pushed on as rapidly as possible to Dixon's, where he arrived on the twelfth of May. Here he found two independent battalions, three hundred and forty-one men all told, under Majors Isaiah Stillman and David Bailey.<sup>2</sup> They had been at the ferry for some days, with abundance of ammunition and supplies, in which

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latter Whiteside was now deficient. These commands were not of the regular levy, and objected to joining the main army except on detached service as rangers. The men were imbued with reckless enthusiasm, impatient at the slow advance of the army, and anxious at once to do something brilliant, feeling confident that all that was necessary to end the war was for them to be given a chance to meet the enemy in open battle.

2 This made the total volunteer force 1,935 men. The Stillman and Bailey battalions were afterwards organized as the Fifth regiment, under Colonel James Johnson.

They obtained Whiteside's permission to go forward in the capacity of a scouting party, and set out on the morning of the thirteenth, under Stillman. Late in the afternoon of the fourteenth they went into camp in a small clump of open timber, three miles southwest of the mouth of Sycamore creek. It was a peculiarly strong position for defense. The troop completely filled the grove, which was surrounded by a perfectly clear prairie, slightly undulating. With an Indian enemy disliking to fight in the open, the troopers might readily have repulsed ten times their own number.

Black Hawk had tarried a week at the prophet's town, holding fruitless councils with the wily and vacillating Winnebagoes. He now learned positively for the first time that he had been deceived. But he pushed on to keep his engagement at Sycamore creek, faint at heart, though vaguely hoping better things of the Pottawattomies. He went into camp with his principal men, in a large grove near the mouth of the creek, met the chiefs of the tribe, and soon found that Shaubena's counsels had rendered it impossible to gain over to his cause more than about one hundred of the hot-head element. Black Hawk asserted in after years that he had at this juncture fully resolved to return at once to the west of the Mississippi should he be again summoned to do so by General Atkinson, and never more disturb the peace of the white settlements. As a parting courtesy to his guests, however, he was making arrangements on the evening of May 14 to give them a dog feast, when the summons came in a manner he little anticipated.

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The white-hating faction of the Pottawattomies was encamped on the Kishwaukee river some seven miles north of Black Hawk, and with them the majority of his own party. The Hawk says that not more than forty of his braves were with him upon the council ground. Toward sunset, in the midst of his preparations, he was informed that a party of white horsemen were going into camp three miles down the Rock. It was Stillman's corps, but the Sac thought it was a small party headed by Atkinson—being then unaware of the size of the force which had been placed in the field against him—and sent out three of his young men with a white flag, to parley with the new arrivals and convey his offer to meet the White Beaver (Atkinson) in council.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography*, pp. 117, 118.

The rangers, who had regarded the expedition as a big frolic, were engaged in preparing their camp, in irregular picnic fashion, when the truce-bearers appeared upon a knoll on the prairie, nearly a mile away. A mob of the troopers rushed out upon the astonished envoys, in helter-skelter form, some with saddles on their horses and some without, and ran the visitors into camp amid a hubbub of yells and imprecations. Black Hawk had sent five other braves to follow the flagmen at a safe distance, and watch developments. This second party was sighted by about twenty of the horsemen, who had been scouring the plain for more Indians, and are said to have been, as were many of Stillman's men at the time, much excited by the too free use of intoxicants. Hot chase was given to the spies, and two of them were killed. The other three galloped back to the council grove and reported to their chief that not only two of their own number, but the three flag-bearers as well, had been cruelly slain. This flagrant disregard of the rules of war caused the blood of the old Sac to boil with righteous indignation. Tearing to shreds the flag of truce which, when the spies broke in upon him, he himself had been preparing to carry to the white camp, he fiercely harangued his thirty-five braves and bade them avenge the blood of their brethren at any risk.

The neutral Pottawattomie visitors at once withdrew from the grove and hastily sped to their villages, while Black Hawk and his party of forty Sacs,<sup>1</sup> securely mounted, sallied forth to meet the enemy. The entire white force, over three hundred strong, was soon seen rushing towards them pell-mell, in a confused mass. The Sacs withdrew behind a fringe of bushes, and their leader hurriedly bade them stand firm. The whites paused on catching a glimpse of the grim array awaiting them; but before they had a chance to turn, the Hawk sounded the warwhoop, and the savages dashed forward and fired. The Sac chief tells us that he thought the charge suicidal when he

1 “Black Hawk in his book says he had only forty in all, and judging from all I can discover in the premises, I believe the number of warriors were between fifty and sixty.”—Reynolds's *My Own Times*, p. 234.

238 ordered it, but, enraged at the treachery of the troopers, he and all with him were willing to die in order to secure reprisal. On the first fire of the Indians, the whites, without returning the volley, fled in great consternation, pursued by about twenty-five savages, until nightfall ended the chase. But nightfall did not end the rout. The volunteers, haunted by the genius of fear, dashed through their own impregnable camp, leaving everything behind them, plunging madly through swamps and creeks till they reached Dixon's, twenty-five miles away, where they straggled in for the next twenty hours. Many of them did not stop there, but kept on at a keen gallop till they reached their own firesides, fifty or more miles further, carrying the report that Black Hawk and two thousand blood-thirsty warriors were sweeping all northern Illinois with the besom of destruction. The white casualties in this ill-starred foray amounted to eleven killed, while the Indians lost the two spies and but one of the flag-bearers, who had been treacherously shot in Stillman's camp—his companions owing their lives to the fleetness of their ponies.

The flight of Stillman's corps was wholly inexcusable, It should, in any event, have stopped at the camp, which was easily defensible.<sup>1</sup> Stillman, no doubt, exerted himself to his utmost to rally his men, but they lacked discipline and that experience which gives soldiers

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confidence in their officers and each other. Their worst fault was their dishonorable treatment of bearers of a flag of truce, a symbol which few savage tribes disregard. But for this act of treachery, the Black Hawk War would have been a bloodless demonstration. Unfortunately for our own good name, this violation of the rules of war was more than once repeated by the Americans during the ensuing contest.

1 “I never was so surprised, in all the fighting I have seen—knowing, too, that the Americans, generally, shoot well—as I was to see this army of several hundreds, retreating without showing fight, and passing immediately through this encampment. I did think that they intended to halt here, or the situation would have forbidden attack by my party, if their number had not exceeded half mine, as we would have been compelled to take the open prairie, whilst they could have picked trees to shield themselves from our fire.”— *Autobiography*, p. 122.

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From his easy and unexpected victory, Black Hawk conceived a poor opinion of the valor of the militiamen, and at the same time a somewhat exaggerated estimate of the prowess of his own braves. Almost wholly destitute of provisions and ammunition, he felt highly elated at the capture of Stillman's rich stores. Recognizing that war had been forced upon him<sup>1</sup> and was henceforth inevitable, he dispatched scouts to watch the white army while he hurriedly removed his women and children, by the way of the Kishwaukee, to the swampy fastnesses of Lake Koshkonong, near the headwaters of Rock river, in Michigan Territory (now Wisconsin). He was guided thither by friendly Winnebagoes, who deemed the position impregnable. From here, recruited by parties of Winnebagoes and Pottawattomies, Black Hawk descended into northern Illinois, prepared for active border warfare.

1 “I had resolved upon giving up the war, and sent a flag of peace to the American war chief, expecting as a matter of right, reason and justice that our flag would be respected, (I have always seen it so in war among the whites), and a council convened, that we



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might explain our grievances having been driven from our village the year before, without permission to gather the corn and provisions, which our women had labored hard to cultivate, and ask permission to return,—thereby giving up all idea of going to war against the whites, Yet, instead of this honorable course which I have always practiced in war, I was forced into war, with about five hundred warriors, to contend against three or four thousand.

“The supplies that Neapope and the prophet told us about, and the reinforcements we were to have, were never more heard of, and it is but justice to our British father to say, were never promised—his chief having sent word in lieu of the lies that were brought to me, ‘for us to remain at peace, as we could accomplish nothing but our own ruin, by going to war,’”— *Autobiography*, pp. 128, 124.

The story of Stillman's defeat inaugurated a reign of terror between the Illinois and Wisconsin rivers, and great consternation throughout the entire west. The name of Black Hawk, whose forces and the nature of whose expedition were greatly exaggerated, became coupled the country over with stories of savage cunning and cruelty, his name serving as a household bugaboo. Shaubena and his friends again rode post-haste through the settlements, 240 sounding the alarm. Many of the settlers had been lulled into a sense of security by the long calm following the invasion at Yellow Banks, and had returned to their fields. But there was now a hurrying back into the forts. They flew like chickens to cover, on the warning of the Hawk's foray. The rustle in the underbrush of a prowling beast; the howl of a wolf on the prairie; the fall of a forest bough; the report of a hunter's gun, were sufficient in this time of panic to blanch the cheeks of the bravest men, and cause families to fly in the agony of fear for scores of miles, leaving all their valuables behind them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Wakefield* relates some amusing anecdotes of the scare, pp. 56–60. Here is one of them, duly vouched for: “In the hurried rout that took place at this time, there was a family that lived near the [Iroquois] river [in northeastern Illinois]; they had no horses, but a large

family of small children; the father and mother each took a child; the rest were directed to follow on foot as fast as possible. The eldest daughter also carried one of the children that was not able to keep up. They fled to the river where they had to cross. The father had to carry over all the children, at different times, as the stream was high, and so rapid the mother and daughter could not stem the current with such a burden. When they all, as they thought, had got over, they started, when the cry of poor little Susan was heard on the opposite bank, asking if they were not going to take her with them. The frightened father again prepared to plunge into the strong current for his child, when the mother seeing it, cried out, 'never mind Susan; we have succeeded in getting ten over, which is more than we expected at first—and we can better spare Susan than you, my dear.' So poor Susan, who was only about four years old, was left to the mercy of the frightful savages. But poor little Susan came off unhurt; one of the neighbors, who was out hunting, came along and took charge of little Susan, the eleventh, who had been so miserably treated by her mother."

May 15, the day of the defeat, Whiteside, with one thousand four hundred men, proceeded to the field of battle, and buried the dead. On the nineteenth, Atkinson and the entire army moved up the Rock, leaving Stillman's corps at Dixon to care for the wounded and guard the supplies. But the army was no sooner out of sight than Stillman's cowards added infamy to their record, by deserting their post and going home. Atkinson hastily returned to Dixon with the regulars, leaving Whiteside to follow Black Hawk's trail up the Kishwaukee.

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But Whiteside's men now began to weary of soldiering. They declared that the Indians had gone into the unexplored and impenetrable swamps of the north, and could never be captured; even were that feat possible, Illinois volunteers, they asserted, were not compelled to serve out of the state, in Michigan Territory; they also claimed to have enlisted for but one month. After two or three days' fruitless skirmishing, and before reaching the state line, the council of officers determined to abandon search and marched southward to Ottawa, where they were, at their own request, mustered out of the service

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by Governor Reynolds on the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth of May. On their way from the Kishwaukee to Ottawa, the militiamen stopped at the Davis farm on Indian creek, where a terrible massacre of whites had occurred a few days before, and the mutilated corpses of fifteen men, women and children were lying on the greensward, unseparated. This revolting spectacle, instead of nerving the troops to renewed action in defense of their homes, appears to have still further disheartened them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Governor Reynolds's statement of the case, in *My Own Times*, pp. 238, 239.

And thus did the first campaign of the war end, as it had begun, with an exhibition of rank cowardice on the part of the Illinois militia.

### **The Closing Campaign .**

Governor Reynolds was active, and at once arranged for a fresh levy of "at least two thousand" men to serve through the war, to rendezvous at Beardstown, June 10; while the general government ordered one thousand regulars under General Winfield Scott to proceed from the seaboard to the seat of war, Scott being directed to conduct future operations against the enemy. Meanwhile, at General Atkinson's earnest appeal, three hundred mounted volunteer rangers, under Henry Frye as colonel and James D. Henry as lieutenant-colonel, agreed to remain in the field to protect the northern line of Illinois settlements until the new levy could be mobilized.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> General Whiteside enlisted as a private in this battalion. Abraham Lincoln was also a member, being enlisted as a "private horseman," in Captain Elijah Iles's company, May 27. He was mustered out at Ottawa, June 16, when the regular levy had taken the field. June 20 he re-enlisted in Captain Jacob M. Early's company, an independent body of rangers not brigaded, and served throughout the war. Besides these three hundred volunteer rangers, divided into six companies. General Atkinson had some three hundred regulars

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on Rock river, the entire force available to check the enemy, until the new levy could assemble.

Black Hawk, upon descending Rock river from Lake Koshkonong, divided his people into war parties—himself leading the largest, about two hundred strong. He was assisted by small scalping parties of Winnebagoes—who were always ready for guerilla butchery when the chance for detection was slight—and by about one hundred Pottawattomies under Mike Girty.

During the irregular hostilities which now broke out in northern Illinois and just across the Michigan (now Wisconsin) border, pending the resumption of the formal campaign, some two hundred whites and nearly as many Indians lost their lives, great suffering was induced among the settlers, and panic among the latter was widespread. Many of the incidents of this partisan strife are rich in historic-interest and have been productive of elaborate discussions in the press and in documentary collections, but in a paper of this scope only a few of the most striking events can be alluded to.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Nearly every volume of *Wis. Hist. Coll.* contains articles and documents bearing on this war, which it would be burdensome to cite here in detail; many of them are invaluable, while some, in the light of later developments, are worthless.

On the twenty-second of May a party of thirty Pottawattomies and three Sacs, under Girty, surprised and slaughtered fifteen men, women, and children congregated at the Davis farm, on Indian creek, twelve miles north of Ottawa, Illinois. Two daughters of William Hall—Sylvia, aged seventeen years, and Rachel, aged fifteen—had their lives spared by their captors, and, being taken to Black Hawk's stronghold above Lake Koshkonong, were there sold for two thousand dollars in horses and trinkets to White Crow, a Winnebago chief, who had been sent out by Henry Gratiot, sub-agent for the Winnebagoes, to conduct the negotiation. The girls were safely delivered into Gratiot's hands at Blue Mounds, on the third of June.

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On the evening of the fourteenth of June, a party of eleven Sacs killed five white men at Spafford's farm, on the Peckatonica river, in what is now La Fayette county, Wisconsin. Colonel Henry Dodge, with twenty-nine men, followed and the next day overtook the savages in a neighboring swamp. A battle ensued lasting but a few minutes, in which the eleven Indians were killed and scalped, while of Dodge's party three were killed and one wounded. The details of no event in the entire war have been so thoroughly discussed and quarreled over as those of this brief but bloody skirmish.<sup>1</sup>

1 Notably in *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, it., iv., v., vi., vii., viii., and x.

On the twenty-fourth of June, Black Hawk's own party made a desperate attack on Apple River fort, fourteen miles east of Galena, Illinois, which sustained the heavy siege for upwards of an hour, the little garrison displaying remarkable vigor, the women and girls molding bullets, loading pieces, and generally proving themselves border heroines. The red men retired with small loss after laying waste by fire the neighboring cabins and fields. The following day this same war party attacked, with singular ferocity, Major Dement's spy battalion of Posey's brigade, one hundred and fifty strong, at Kellogg's grove, sixteen miles to the east. General Posey came up with a detachment of volunteers to relieve the force and continued the skirmish. The Indians were routed, losing about fifteen killed, while the whites lost but five.<sup>2</sup>

2 Kellogg's grove, afterwards Waddams's, and now Timms's, is situated in the southwestern portion of Kent township, Stephenson county, Illinois, about nine miles south of Lena. The five men killed in the skirmish of June 25, 1832, had been buried at different points within the grove. During the summer of 1886 their remains were collected, by order of the county board of supervisors, and decently interred upon a commanding knoll at the edge of the copse, within a half-acre of land which had been deeded to the county for that purpose. With these remains were placed those of five or six other victims of the Black Hawk War, militiamen and civilians, who had been buried where they fell in other portions of the county. A monument costing five hundred dollars was erected by the board over

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these remains—a shaft thirty feet in height, constructed of light rock quarried within the grove, on three sides of which are marble slabs appropriately inscribed. This monument was formally dedicated, in the presence of twenty-five hundred persons, September 30, 1886, under the auspices of W. R. Goddard post of the G. A. R., located at Lena. Pioneer addresses were delivered by ex-Congressman Henry S. Magoon of Darlington, Wisconsin; Colonel D. F. Hitt of Ottawa, Illinois, and Michael Stoskopf and S. J. Dodds of Freeport, Illinois; while Dr. W. P. Naramore, of Lena, was president of the day.

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At Plum River fort, Burr Oak grove, Sinsiniwa Mound, and Blue Mounds, skirmishes of less importance were fought.

The people of the lead-mining settlements in what is now southwestern Wisconsin, deemed themselves peculiarly liable to attack, from the fear that the troops centered on Rock river would drive the enemy upon them across the Illinois border. The news of the invasion at Yellow Banks was received by the miners early in May, and active preparations for defense and offense were at once undertaken. Colonel Henry Dodge, one of the pioneers of the lead region, and an energetic citizen largely interested in smelting, held a commission as chief of the Michigan militia west of Lake Michigan, and assumed direction of military operations north of the Illinois line. With a company of twenty-seven hastily-equipped rangers he made an expedition to Dixon, with a view both to reconnoiter the country and solicit aid from Governor Reynolds's force. He failed in this latter mission, however, and returned to the mines carrying the news of Stillman's defeat.<sup>1</sup> After making preparations for recruiting three additional companies, Dodge proceeded with Indian Agent Gratiot and a troop of

<sup>1</sup> "General Dodge was camped in the vicinity [Dixon's], on the north side of Rock river, and I wrote him, at night [May 14–15], the facts of Stillman's disaster, and that his frontiers of Wisconsin would be in danger. He returned immediately to Wisconsin."—Reynolds's *My Own Times*, p. 235.

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245 fifty volunteers to White Crow's Winnebago village at the head of Fourth lake, on a point of land now known as Fox's bluff, some four miles northwest of the site of Madison. The Winnebagoes were always deemed a source of danger to the mining settlements, and it was desirable to keep them quiet during the present crisis. Colonel Dodge held council with them on the twenty-fifth of May, and received profuse assurances of their fidelity to the American cause, but the partisan leader appears to have justly placed small reliance upon their sincerity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dodge's "talk" is given in Smith's *History of Wisconsin*, i., pp. 416, 417. See *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, ii., p. 339, for White Crow's taunt flung at Dodge, that the whites were "a soft-shelled breed," and could not fight. For sketch of this chief—whose Indian name was Kaukishkaka (The Blind), he having lost an eye in a brawl—see *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, x., pp. 495, 496. Washburne's estimate of him, *Ibid.*, p. 253, is unfavorable; others of his white contemporaries speak with enthusiasm of his strength as a native orator, and his manly bearing.

Returning from this council, Dodge set out from his headquarters at Fort Union on an active campaign with two hundred mounted rangers enlisted for the war. These men, gathered from the mines and fields, were a free-and-easy set of dare-devils, imbued with the spirit of adventure and an intense hatred of the Indian race. While well disciplined to the extent of always obeying orders when sent into the teeth of danger, they swung through the country with little regard to the rules of the manual, and presented a striking contrast to the habits and appearance of the regulars.

On the third of June they arrived at Blue Mounds, just in time to receive the Hall girls brought in by White Crow. The Crow and his companions being offensive in their demeanor, Dodge had them thrown into the guard-house and held for a time as hostages for the good behavior of the rest of the Fourth-lake band. On the eleventh, he was joined by a small party of Illinois rangers from Galena, under Captain J. W. Stephenson, and the united force proceeded to General Atkinson's recruiting quarters, then at Ottawa, where

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Dodge conferred with the general as to the future conduct of the campaign. After remaining a few days, the rangers returned to the lead mines to complete the defenses there.

In less than three weeks from the date of Stillman's defeat, Atkinson and Reynolds had together recruited and organized a new mounted militia force, and on the fifteenth of June the troops rendezvoused at Fort Wilburn. There were three brigades, respectively headed by Generals Alexander Posey, M. K. Alexander and James D. Henry. Each brigade had a spy battalion. The aggregate strength of this volunteer army was three thousand two hundred, which was in addition to Fry's rangers, half of whom continued their services to protect the settlements and stores west of the Rock river. With these, Dodge's Michigan rangers, and the regular infantry, the entire army now in the field numbered about four thousand effective men.

A party of Posey's brigade was sent in advance from Fort Wilburn to scour the country between Galena and the Rock, and disperse Black Hawk's war party. It was this force that had the brush with the Sacs at Kellogg's Grove on the 25th of June, previously alluded to. Meanwhile, Alexander's and Henry's brigades had arrived overland at Dixon's. When news of the defeat of the Indians at Kellogg's arrived, Alexander was dispatched in haste to Plum river to intercept the fugitives should they attempt to cross the Mississippi at that point; while Atkinson, with Henry and the regulars, remained at Dixon's to await developments. On learning that Black Hawk's main camp was still near Lake Koshkonong, Atkinson at once pushed on up the east bank of the Rock, leaving Dixon on the afternoon of June 27. The main army, now consisting of four hundred regulars and two thousand one hundred volunteer troops, was joined the following day by a party of seventy-five friendly Pottawatomies, who seemed eager to join in the prospective scrimmage.

On the thirtieth, the army crossed the Illinois-Wisconsin boundary about one mile east of the site of Beloit, then the location of the Turtle village of the Winnebagoes, whose 247 inhabitants had flown at the approach of the column.<sup>1</sup> Sac signs were fresh, for Black



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Hawk, after his defeat at Kellogg's at the hands of Posey and Dement, had, instead of crossing the Mississippi, fled directly to his stronghold, reaching the Rock above the mouth of the Kishwaukee three or four days in advance of the white army. It was this warm trail that Atkinson's men were now following, with the vehemence of blood-hounds.

1 In the *Beloit Weekly Free Press* of October 15, 1891, and January 21, 1892, Cornelius Buckley discusses in detail the place of crossing the boundary, and the site of Atkinson's camp, which latter he places "near the northeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 25, town 1, and range 12, and 480 rods north of the state line \* \* \* and directly north of the old fair grounds."

At the close of each day, when possible, the troops selected a camp in the timber, were protected by breastworks, and invariably slept on their arms, for there was constant apprehension of a night attack, the rear guard of the savages prowling about in the dark and being frequently fired on by the sentinels.

On the second of July the army arrived at the outlet of Lake Koshkonong. Hastily-deserted Indian camps were found, with white scalps hanging on the poles of the tepees. Scouts made a tour of the lake, but beyond a few stragglers nothing of importance was seen. A few Winnebagoes who were captured gave vague and contradictory testimony, and one of them was shot and scalped for his impertinence. Several succeeding days were spent in fruitless scouting. July 4, Alexander arrived with his brigade, reporting that he had found no traces of red men on the Mississippi. On the sixth, Posey reported with Dodge's squadron.

Dodge was at Fort Hamilton on the twenty-eighth of June, reorganizing his two hundred rangers, when Posey arrived from Kellogg's grove, bringing orders from Atkinson to join forces with Dodge and at once, under Posey's command, to join the main army on the Koshkonong. At Sugar river, Dodge was joined by Stephenson's Galena company and by a party of twenty Menomonees and eight or ten 248 white and half-breed scouts

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under Colonel William S. Hamilton, who was a prominent lead miner and a son of the famous Alexander. This recruited his squadron so that it now numbered about three hundred. Proceeding by the way of the Four Lakes, White Crow and thirty Winnebagoes offered to conduct Posey and Dodge to Black Hawk's camp, and unite with them for that purpose. After advancing through almost impassable swamps for several days, the corps was within short distance of the locality sought, when an express came from Atkinson ordering it to proceed without delay to his camp on Bark river, an eastern tributary of Lake Koshkonong, as he believed the main body of the enemy to be in that vicinity. This order greatly provoked Dodge, but it proved to be singularly opportune. Black Hawk's camp occupied a position very advantageous for defense, at the summit of a steep declivity on the east bank of the Rock, where the river was difficult of passage, being rapid and clogged with boulders.<sup>1</sup> White Crow's solicitude as a guide was undoubtedly caused by his desire to lead this small force, constituting the left wing of the army, into a trap where it might have been badly whipped if not annihilated.

1 The site of the present village of Hustisford, Wisconsin.

The army was thus formed: Posey's brigade and Dodge's rangers comprised the left wing, on the west side of the Rock; the regulars under Taylor, and Henry's volunteers, were the right wing, commanded by Atkinson in person, and marched on the east bank; while Alexander's brigades also on the west bank, was the center. Dodge had conceived a poor opinion of Posey's men, and on the arrival of the left wing at headquarters, solicited a change of companions. To secure harmony, Atkinson caused Posey and Alexander to exchange positions.

While the treacherous White Crow had been endeavoring to entrap the left wing, other Winnebagoes informed Atkinson that Black Hawk was encamped on an island in the Whitewater river, a few miles east of the American camp on the Bark. In consequence, the commander was from 249 the seventh to the ninth of July running a wild-goose chase through the broad morasses and treacherous sink-holes of that region. It was because

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of this false information that Atkinson had hastily summoned the left wing to his aid, and thus unwittingly saved it in the nick of time from a great danger. The wily Winnebagoes overreached themselves through lack of concert in their lying, for in the meantime the Hawk, startled from his cover by the manoeuvring in his neighborhood, fled westward to the Wisconsin river.

Governor Reynolds and several other prominent Illinoisans who were with the army, now become discouraged and left for home by way of Galena, impressed with the opinion that the troops, now in wretched physical condition, almost out of provisions, and floundering aimlessly through the Wisconsin bogs, were pursuing an *ignis-fatuus*, and that Black Hawk could never be captured.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "On the 10th of July, in the midst of a considerable wilderness, the provisions were exhausted, and the army forced to abandon the pursuit of the enemy for a short time. Seeing the difficulties to reach the enemy, and knowing the extreme uncertainty of ever reaching Black Hawk by these slow movements, caused most of the army to believe we would never overtake the enemy. This condition of affairs forced on all reflecting men much mortification, and regret that this campaign also would do nothing. Under these circumstances, a great many worthy and respectable individuals, who were not particularly operative in the service, returned to their home. My staff and myself left the army at the burnt village, on Rock river, above Lake Koshkonong, and returned by Galena to the frontiers and home. When I reached Galena, the Indian panic was still raging with the people there, and I was compelled to order out more troops to protect the citizens—although the militia of the whole country was in service." Reynolds's *My Own Times*. pp. 251, 252.

On the same day (July 10), Henry's and Alexander's brigades were dispatched with Dodge's squadron to Fort Winnebago, at the portage of the Fox and Wisconsin rivers, eighty miles to the northwest, for much-needed provisions, it being the nearest supply point. The Second regiment of Posey's brigade, under Colonel Ewing, was sent down

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the Rock to Dixon, with an officer accidentally wounded; while, with the rest of his troops, Posey was ordered to Fort Hamilton 250 to guard the mining country, which Dodge's absence had left exposed to the enemy. Atkinson himself fell back to Lake Koshkonong, and built a fort a few miles up the Bark river, on the eastern limit of the present village of Fort Atkinson.

On arrival at Fort Winnebago, the troopers found a number of Winnebago Indians there, all of them full of advice to the white chiefs. There was also at the fort a famous half-breed scout and trader named Pierre Paquette, long in the trusted employ of the American Fur Company. He informed Henry and Dodge of the true location of Black Hawk's stronghold, as White Crow had done, with added information as to its character, and, with twelve Winnebago assistants, was engaged as pilot thither.

While the division was at the fort, there was a stampede of horses from some unknown cause, the animals plunging madly for thirty miles through the neighboring swamps, where upwards of fifty were lost.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reynolds's *My Own Times*, pp. 254, 255; also *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, x., p. 314.

Henry and Dodge at once resolved to return to camp by way of the Hustisford rapids, and there engage Black Hawk if possible. But Alexander's men refused to enter upon this perilous expedition, and insisted on obeying Atkinson's orders to return to headquarters by the shortest available route. Alexander easily yielded to his troopers' demands, and the mutinous example would have been successfully imitated in Henry's brigade but for the firmness of that commander, who was a strict disciplinarian. Alexander returned direct to camp, July fifteenth, with the men whose horses had been lost in the stampede, and twelve days' provisions for the main army. The same day, Henry and Dodge, the former in command, started out with twelve days' supplies for their own force, accompanied by Paquette and the Winnebago guides. The ranks had been depleted from many causes, so

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that roll-call on the sixteenth disclosed but six hundred effective men in Henry's brigade, and, about a hundred and fifty in Dodge's squadron.

On the eighteenth, the troopers reached Rock river and 251 found the Winnebago village at which Black Hawk and his band had been quartered, but the enemy had fled. The Winnebagoes insisted that their late visitors were now at Cranberry lake,<sup>1</sup> a half day's march up the river, and the white commanders resolved to proceed thither the following day. They had arrived at the village at noon, and at 2 P. M. Adjutants Merriam of Henry's, and Woodbridge of Dodge's, started south with information of the supposed discovery, to Atkinson's camp, thirty-five miles down the river. Little Thunder, a Winnebago chief, accompanied them as guide. When nearly twenty miles out, and half way Between the present sites of Watertown and Jefferson, they suddenly struck a broad, fresh trail trending to the west. Little Thunder became greatly excited, and shouted and gestured vehemently, but the adjutants were unable to understand a word of the Winnebago tongue. When he suddenly turned his horse and dashed back to Henry's camp, they were obliged to hasten after him, as further progress through the tangled thickets and wide morasses without a pilot was inadvisable. Little Thunder had returned to inform his people that the trail of Black Hawk in his flight to the Mississippi had been discovered, and to warn them that further dissembling was useless.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Hericon lake, in Dodge county.

<sup>2</sup> *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, ii., p. 407.

The news was received with great joy in the camp of the volunteers. Their sinking spirits at once revived, and pursuit on the fresh scent was undertaken the following morning, with an enthusiasm that henceforth had no occasion to lag. All possible encumbrances were left behind, so that progress should be unimpeded. The course lay slightly to the north of west, through the present towns of Lake Mills and Cottage Grove. The Chicago & Northwestern railway between Jefferson Junction and Madison follows very closely Black

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Hawk's trail from the Rock river to the Four lakes. Deep swamps and sink-holes were met by the army, nearly the entire distance. The men had frequently to dismount and wade in water and mud to their armpits, while a violent thunder storm with phenomenal rainfall, the first night 252 out, followed by an unseasonable drop in the temperature, increased the natural difficulties of progress. But the straggling Winnebagoes, who were deserting the band of Sac fugitives in this time of want and peril, reported the Hawk but two miles in advance, and the volunteers eagerly hurried on with empty stomachs and wet clothes. By sunset of the second day, July 20, they reached the lakes, going into camp for the night a quarter of a mile north of the northeast extremity of Third lake.<sup>1</sup> That same night, Black Hawk was strongly ambushed, seven or eight miles beyond, near the present village of Pheasant Branch.

<sup>1</sup> *Wakefield*, who was with the army, gives this picture (p. 66) of the Four-lake country, as it appeared to him, July 20, 183: "Here it may not be uninteresting to the reader, to give a small outline of those lakes. From a description of the country, a person would very naturally suppose that those lakes were as little pleasing to the eye of the traveller, as the country is. But not so. I think they are the most beautiful bodies of water I ever saw. The first one that we came to [Third lake], was about ten miles in circumference, and the water as clear as crystal. The earth sloped back in a gradual rise; the bottom of the lake appeared to be entirely covered with white pebbles, and no appearance of its being the least swampy. The second one that we came to [Fourth lake], appeared to be much larger. It must have been twenty miles in circumference. The ground rose very high all around; —and the heaviest kind of timber grew close to the water's edge. If those lakes were any where else, except in the country they are, they would be considered among the wonders of the world. But the country they are situated in is not fit for any civilized nation of people to inhabit. It appears that the Almighty intended it for the children of the forest. The other two lakes [First and Second], we did not get close enough to for me to give a complete description of them; but those who saw them, stated that they were very much like the others."

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At daybreak of the twenty-first, the troops were up, and, after fording the Catfish river where the Williamson street bridge now (1892) crosses it, swept across the isthmus between Third and Fourth lakes in regular line of battle, Ewing's spies to the front. Where to-day is built the park-like city of Madison, the capital of Wisconsin, was then a heavy forest with frequent dense thickets of underbrush. The line of march was along Third-lake shore to about where Fauerbach's brewery now is, thence almost due west to Fourth lake, the shores of which were skirted through 253 the present state university grounds, across intervening swamps and hills to the Pheasant branch, and thence due northwest to the Wisconsin river. The advance was so rapid that forty horses gave out during the day, between the Catfish and the Wisconsin. When his animal succumbed, the trooper would trudge on afoot, throwing away his camp-kettle and other encumbrances, thus following the example of the fugitives ahead of him, the trail being lined with Indian mats, kettles, and camp equipage discarded in the hurry of flight. Some half-dozen inoffensive Sac stragglers—chiefly old men who had become exhausted by the famine<sup>1</sup> now prevailing in the Hawk's camp—were shot at intervals and scalped by the whites,—two of them within the present limits of Madison. It was three o'clock in the afternoon before the enemy's rear guard of twenty braves under Neapope was overtaken. Several skirmishes ensued. The timber was still thick, and it was impossible at first to know whether Neapope's party were the main body of the Indians or not. The knowledge of their weakness became apparent after a time, and thereafter when the savages made a feint the spies would charge and easily disperse them.

<sup>1</sup> “During our encampment at Four Lakes, we were hard put, to obtain enough to eat to support nature. Stuck in a swampy, marshy country (which had been selected in consequence of the great difficulty required to gain access thereto), there was but little game of any sort to be found—and fish were equally scarce \* \* \* We were forced to dig roots and bark trees, to obtain something to satisfy our hunger and keep us alive. Several of our old people became so much reduced, as actually to die with hunger.”—*Autobiography*, p. 130.

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At about half past four o'clock, when within a mile and a half of the river, and some twenty-five miles northwest of the site of Madison, Neapope's band, reinforced by a score of braves under Black Hawk, made a bold stand to cover the flight of the main body of his people down the bluffs and across the stream. Every fourth man of the white column was detailed to hold the horses, while the rest of the troopers advanced on foot. The savages made a heavy charge, yelling like madmen, and endeavored to flank the whites, 254 but Colonel Fry on the right and Colonel Jones on the left repulsed them with loss. The Sacs now dropped into the grass, which was nearly six feet high, but after a half hour of hot firing on both sides, with a few casualties evenly distributed, Dodge, Ewing, and Jones charged the enemy with the bayonet, driving them up a rising piece of ground at the top of which a second rank of savages was found. After further firing, the Indians swiftly retreated down the bluffs to join their main body now engaged in crossing the river. It had been raining softly during the greater part of the battle, and there was difficulty experienced in keeping the muskets dry, but a sharp fire was kept up between the lines until dusk. At the base of the bluffs there was swampy ground some sixty yards in width, and then a heavy fringe of timber on a strip of firm ground along the river bank. As the Indians could reach this vantage point before being overtaken, it was deemed best to abandon the pursuit for the night.

Black Hawk was himself the conductor of this battle, on the part of the Sacs, and sat on a white pony on a neighboring knoll, directing his men with stentorian voice.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Black Hawk says he lost six warriors in this engagement at Wisconsin Heights (opposite Prairie du Sac); Mrs. Kinzie's *Wau Bun* says, it was reported at Fort Winnebago that fifty Sacs were killed; *Wakefield* puts the number at sixty-eight killed outright, and twenty-five mortally wounded.

After dusk had set in, a large party of the fugitives, composed mainly of women, children, and old men, were placed on a large raft and in canoes begged from the Winnebagoes, and sent down the river in the hope that the soldiers at Fort Crawford, guarding the mouth



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of the Wisconsin, would allow these non-combatants to cross the Mississippi in peace. But too much faith was placed in the humanity of the Americans. Lieutenant Ritner, with a small detachment of regulars, was sent out by Indian Agent Joseph M. Street<sup>2</sup> to intercept these forlorn and nearly starved wretches, a messenger from the field of battle having apprised the agent of their approach. Ritner fired on them a

<sup>2</sup> Stationed at Prairie du Chien.

255 short distance above Fort Crawford, killing fifteen men and capturing thirty-two women and children. and four men. Nearly as many more were drowned during the onslaught, while of the rest, who escaped to the woods, all but a half score perished with hunger or were massacred by a party of three hundred Menomonee allies from the Green Bay country, under Colonel Stambaugh and a small staff of white officers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *post*, "Boyd Papers," for the documentary history of Stambaugh's expedition.

During the night after the battle at Wisconsin Heights—as it has ever since been known—there were frequent alarms from prowling Indians, and the men, fearing an attack, were under arms nearly the entire time. About an hour and a half before dawn of the twenty-second, a loud, shrill voice, speaking in an unknown tongue, was heard from the direction of the knoll occupied by Black Hawk during the battle. There was a great panic in the camp, for it was thought that the savage leader was giving orders for an attack, and Henry found it desirable to make his men a patriotic speech to bolster their courage. Just before daylight the harangue ceased. It was afterwards learned that the orator was Neapope, who had spoken in Winnebago, presuming that Paquette and the Winnebago pilots were still in the camp. But they had left for Fort Winnebago during the night succeeding the battle, and there was not one among the troops who had understood a word of the speech. It was a speech of conciliation addressed to the victors. Neapope had said that the Sacs had their squaws, children and old people with them, that they had been unwillingly forced into war, that they were literally starving, and if allowed to cross the Mississippi in peace would never more do harm. But the plea fell on unwitting ears, and thus failed the second earnest

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attempt of the British band to close the war. As for Neapope, finding that his mission had failed, he fled to the Winnebagoes, leaving his half-dozen companions to return with the discouraging news to Black Hawk, now secretly encamped in a neighboring ravine north of the Wisconsin.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Autobiography*, pp. 131–133. Black Hawk does not mention this incident of Neapope's night harangue. *Reynolds* mentions it, p. 262; so also *Ford*, p. 146, and *Wakefield*, p. 86.

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The twenty-second of July was spent by the white army on the battlefield, making preparations to march to Blue Mounds for provisions. It was discovered that the enemy had escaped during the night across or down the river, and it was thought that the troops were insufficiently provided with food for a long chase through the wholly unknown country beyond the Wisconsin river.

On the twenty-third, Henry marched with his corps to the fort at Blue Mounds, and late that evening was joined by Atkinson and Alexander, who, on being informed by express of the discovery of the trail and the rapid pursuit, had left the fort on the Koshkonong, officered by Captain Low, and hastened on to the Mounds to join the victors. Atkinson assumed command, distributed rations to the men, and ordered that the pursuit be resumed.

On the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth, the Wisconsin was crossed on rafts at Helena, then a deserted log village, whose cabins had furnished material for the floats.<sup>1</sup> Posey had now joined the army with his brigade, and all of the generals were together again. The advance was commenced at noon of the twenty-eighth, the four hundred and fifty regulars, now under General Brady—with Colonel Taylor still of the party — in front; while Dodge, Posey, and Alexander followed in the order named, Henry bringing up the rear in charge of the baggage. It appears that there was much jealousy displayed by Atkinson, at the fact that the laurels of the campaign, such as they were, had thus far been won by the volunteers; and Henry, as the chief of the victors at Wisconsin Heights, was especially

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unpopular at headquarters. But the brigadier and his men trudged peacefully on behind, judiciously pocketing what they felt to be an insult.<sup>2</sup>

1 See *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, xi., p. 403. The town had been built for the commodation of shot-makers, but had been deserted at the outbreak of the war.

2 *Ford*, pp. 146–155, publishes some interesting correspondence, showing that Dodge was disposed to claim more than his share of the honors of this and some other engagements in the war, and to ignore Henry as his superior officer. Those men under Dodge, who have written about the campaign, extol the superior merits of their chief; but in Illinois pioneer reminiscences, Henry is invariably the hero of the occasion.

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After marching four or five miles northeastward, the trail of the fugitives was discovered trending to the north of west, towards the Mississippi. The country between the Wisconsin and the great river is rugged and forbidding in character; it was then unknown to whites, and Winnebago guides were almost equally unfamiliar with it. The difficulties of progress were great, swamps and turbulent rivers being freely interspersed between the steep, thickly-wooded hills. However, the fact that they were noticeably gaining on the redskins constantly spurred the troopers to great endeavors. The pathway was strewn with the corpses of dead Sacs, who had died of wounds and starvation, and there were frequent evidences that the fleeing wretches were eating the bark of trees and the sparse flesh of their fagged-out ponies to sustain life.<sup>1</sup>

1 “ I started over a rugged country, to go to the Mississippi, intending to cross it, and return to my nation. Many of our people were compelled to go on foot, for want of horses, which, in consequence of their having had nothing to eat for a long time, caused our march to be very slow. At length we reached the Mississippi, having lost some of our old men and little children, who perished on the way with hunger.”— *Autobiography*, p. 133.

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On Wednesday, the first of August, Black Hawk and his now sadly-depleted and almost famished band reached the Mississippi at a point two miles below the mouth of the Bad Axe, one of its smallest eastern tributaries, and about forty north of the Wisconsin. Here he undertook to cross; there were, however, but two or three canoes to be had, and the work was slow. One large raft, laden with women and children, was sent down the east side of the river towards Prairie du Chien, but on the way it capsized and nearly all of its occupants were drowned.

In the middle of the afternoon, the steamer "Warrior," of Prairie du Chien, used to transport army supplies, appeared on the scene with John Throckmorton as captain.<sup>2</sup> On 17

<sup>2</sup> See Fonda's report of the "Warrior's" part in the battle, *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, v., pp. 261–264.

258 board were Lieutenants Kingsbury and Holmes, with fifteen regulars and six volunteers. They had been up the river to notify the Sioux chief, Wabasha,—whose village was on the sight of Winona, Minnesota,—that the Sacs were headed in that direction. As the steamer neared the shore, Black Hawk appeared on the bank with a white flag, and called out to the captain, in the Winnebago tongue, to send a boat ashore, as the Sacs wished to give themselves up. A Winnebago stationed in the bow interpreted the request, but the captain affected to believe that an ambush was intended, and ordered the Hawk to come aboard in his own craft. But this the Sac could not do, for the only canoes he had were engaged in transporting his women and children over the river, and were not now within hail. His reply to that effect was met in a few moments by three quick rounds of canister-shot, which went plowing through the little group of Indians on the shore, with deadly effect. A fierce fire of musketry ensued on both sides, in which twenty-three Indians were killed, while the whites suffered but one wounded. The "Warrior," now being out of wood, returned to Prairie du Chien for the night, the soldiers being highly elated at their share in the campaign.

During the night a few more savages crossed the river; but Black Hawk, foreseeing that disaster was about to befall his arms, gathered a party of ten warriors, among whom was

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the Prophet, and these, with about thirty-five squaws and children, headed east for a rocky hiding place at the dells of the Wisconsin, whither some Winnebagoes offered to guide them.<sup>1</sup> The next day, the heart of the old man smote him for having left his people to their fate, and he returned in time to witness from a neighboring bluff the conclusion of the battle of Bad Axe, that struck the death-blow to the British band. With a howl of rage, he turned back into the forest and fled.

<sup>1</sup> *Wakefield*, pp. 97, 98.

The aged warrior had left excellent instructions to his braves, in the event of the arrival of the white army by and. Twenty picked Sacs were ordered to stand rear guard on one of the high bluffs which here line the east 259 bank of the Mississippi, and when engaged, to fall back three miles up the river, thus to deceive the whites as to the location of the main band, and gain time for the flight of the latter across the stream, which was progressing slowly with but two canoes now left for the purpose.

Atkinson's men were on the move by two o'clock in the morning of August 2. When within four or five miles of the Sac position, the decoys were encountered. The density of the timber obstructing the view, and the twenty braves being widely separated, it was supposed that Black Hawk's main force had been overtaken. The army accordingly spread itself for the attack, Alexander and Posey forming the right wing, Henry the left, and Dodge and the regulars the center. When the savage decoys retreated up the river, as directed by the chief, the white center and right wing followed quickly. leaving the left wing — with the exception of one of its regiments detailed to cover the rear — without orders. This was clearly an affront to Henry, Atkinson's design doubtless being to crowd him out of what all anticipated would be the closing engagement of the campaign, and what little glory might come of it.

But the fates did not desert the brigadier. Some of Ewing's spies, attached to his command, accidentally discovered that the main trail of the fugitive band was lower down

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the river than where the decoys were leading the army. Henry, with his entire force, thereupon descended a bluff in the immediate neighborhood, and after a gallant charge on foot through the open wooded plateau between the base of the bluff and the shore, found himself in the midst of the main body of three hundred warriors, which was about the number of the attacking party. A desperate conflict ensued, the bucks being driven from tree to tree at the point of the bayonet, while women and children plunged madly into the river, many of them to immediately drown. The air was rent with savage yells and whoops, with the loud cries of the troopers as they cheered each other on, and with the shrill notes of the bugle directing the details of the attack.

It was fully half an hour after Henry made his descent, 260 when Atkinson, hearing the din of battle in his rear, came hastening to the scene with the center and right wing, driving in the decoys and stragglers before him, thus completing the corral. The carnage now proceeded more fiercely than ever. The red men fought with intense desperation, and, though weak from hunger, died like braves. A few escaped through a broad slough to a willow island, which the steamer "Warrior," now re-appearing on the river, raked from end to end with canister. This was followed by a wild dash through the mud and water, by a detachment of regulars, and a few of Henry's and Dodge's volunteers, who ended the business by sweeping the island with a bayonet charge. Some of the fugitives succeeded in swimming to the west bank of the Mississippi, but many were drowned on the way, or coolly picked off by sharp-shooters, who exercised no more mercy towards squaws and children than they did towards braves — treating them all as though they were rats instead of human beings.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Although the warriors fought with the courage and valor of desperation, yet the conflict resembled more a carnage than a regular battle."—Reynolds's *My Own Times*, p. 265.

"Our braves, but few in number, finding that the enemy paid no regard to age or sex, and seeing that they were murdering helpless women and little children, determined to fight until they were killed."— *Autobiography*, p. 135.

*Wakefield* says, p. 85, "It was a horrid sight to witness little children, wounded and suffering the most excruciating pain. \* \* \* It was enough to make the heart of the most hardened being on earth to ache."

This "battle," or massacre, lasted three hours. It was a veritable pandemonium, filled with frightful scenes of bloodshed. The Indians lost one hundred and fifty killed outright, while as many more of both sexes and all ages and conditions were drowned — some fifty only being taken prisoners, and they mostly women and children. About three hundred of the band crossed the river successfully, before and during the struggle. The whites lost but seventeen killed and twelve wounded.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I follow Reynolds, *My Own Times*, p. 265. He says, "Some squaws were killed by mistake in the battle. They were mixed with the warriors and some of them dressed like the males."

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Those of the Sacs who safely regained the west bank were soon set upon by a party of one hundred Sioux, under Wabasha, sent out for that purpose by General Atkinson, and one-half of these helpless, half-starved non-combatants were cruelly slaughtered, while many others died of exhaustion and wounds before they reached those of their friends who had been wise enough to abide by Keokuk's peaceful admonitions and stay at home. Thus, out of the band of nearly one thousand persons who crossed the Mississippi at the Yellow Banks, in April, not more than one hundred and fifty, all told, lived to tell the tragic story of the Black Hawk War—a tale fraught with dishonor to the American name.

The rest can soon be told. On the seventh of August, when the army had returned to Prairie du Chien, General Winfield Scott arrived and assumed command, discharging the volunteers the following day. Cholera among his troops had detained him first at Detroit, then at Chicago, and lastly at Rock Island, nearly one-fourth of his force of one thousand regulars having died with the pestilence. Independent of this, the American loss in the war,

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including volunteers and settlers killed in the irregular skirmishes and in massacres, was not over two hundred and fifty. The financial cost to the nation and to the state of Illinois aggregated nearly two millions of dollars.

On the twenty-seventh of August, Chætar and One-eyed Decorah, two Winnebago braves who were desirous of displaying their newly-inspired loyalty to the Americans, delivered Black Hawk and the Prophet into the hands of Agent Street, at Prairie du Chien. They had found the conspirators at the Wisconsin river dells, above the site of Kilbourn City.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See McBride's "Capture of Black Hawk," in *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, v., pp. 293, 294; *Id.*, viii., p. 316, *note*; *Wakefield*, pp. 95–101. There have been many traditions of the capture, differing from the above, but there is no documentary evidence to substantiate them. The standard account, which I follow, is based upon Street's official report.

On the twenty-first of September, a treaty of peace was signed at Fort Armstrong; and Black Hawk, the Prophet, 262 and Neapope — who had been captured later — were, with others, kept as hostages for the good behavior of the small remnant of the British band and their Winnebago allies.<sup>1</sup> They were kept through the winter at Jefferson Barracks (now St. Louis),<sup>2</sup> and in April, 1833, taken to Washington. They staid as prisoners of war in Fortress Monroe until June 4, when they were discharged. After visiting the principal cities of the east, where Black Hawk was much lionized, and given an adequate idea of the power and resources of the whites, the party returned to Fort Armstrong, where they arrived about the first of August. Here Black Hawk's pride was completely crushed, he being formally transferred by the military authorities to the guardianship of his hated rival, Keokuk. This ceremony the fallen chief regarded as an irreparable insult, which he nursed with much bitterness the remainder of his days.

<sup>1</sup> *Treaties* (Wash., 1837), p. 508.

<sup>2</sup> Lieutenant Jefferson Davis took charge of the Transfer of the prisoners from Fort Armstrong to Jefferson Barracks. The Davis biography cited on p. 234, *note*, says, "He



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entirely won the heart of the savage chieftain, and before they reached Jefferson Barracks there had sprung up between the stern red warrior and the young pale face a warm friendship which only terminated with the life of Black Hawk.”

The aged warrior, with the weight of seventy-one years upon his whitened head, finally passed away on the third of October, 1838, at his home on a small reservation set apart for him and his personal followers. on the Des Moines river, in Davis county, Iowa.<sup>3</sup> In July of the following year (1839), an Illinois physician stole his body from its grave. Complaint being made by Black Hawk's family, Governor Lucas of Iowa caused the skeleton to be delivered to him at Burlington, then the capital of that Territory, in the spring of 1840. The seat of government being moved to Iowa City later in the year, the box containing the remains was deposited in a law office in the latter town

<sup>3</sup> Cornelius Buckley writes, in the *Beloit Weekly Free Press*, October 15, 1891: “He was buried in the northeast corner of Davis county, on section 2, township 70, range 12, ninety rods from where he died, and near the present village of Eldon.”

<sup>263</sup> where it remained until the night of January 16, 1853, when the building was destroyed by fire.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It had been designed to place the warrior's bones in the museum of the Iowa Historical and Geological Institute, but the fire occurred before the removal could take place.—*Burlington (Iowa) Gazette*, August 25, 1888.

Black Hawk was an indiscreet man. His troubles were brought about by a lack of mental balance, aided largely by untoward circumstances. He was of a highly romantic temperament. He was carried away by mere sentiment, and allowed himself to be deceived by tricksters. But he was honest—often more honorable than those who were his conquerors. He was, above all things, a patriot. The year before his death, in a speech to a party of whites who were making a holiday hero of him, he thus forcibly defended his motives: “Rock river was a beautiful country. I liked my town, my cornfields, and the home

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of my people. I fought for them.” No poet could have penned for him a more touching epitaph.

Forbearance, honorable dealing, and the exercise of sound policy upon the part of the whites, could easily have prevented the war, with its enormous expenditure of blood and treasure. Squatters had been allowed to violate treaty obligations, in harassing the Sacs in their ancient village long before the government had sold the land; for six thousand dollars—a beggarly Sum to use in securing peace with a formidable band of starving savages, grown desperate from ill-usage—Black Hawk would, in 1831, have quietly removed his people to the west of the Mississippi, without any show of force;<sup>2</sup> at Sycamore creek, an observance of one of the oldest and most universally-established rules of war would have procured a peaceful retreat of the discouraged invaders; after the battle of Wisconsin Heights, reasonable prudence in keeping an interpreter in camp, in a hostile country, would have enabled Neapope's peaceful mission to succeed; a humane regard for the ordinary usages of warfare, on the part of the reckless soldiers on the steamer “Warrior,” at the Bad Axe, would have secured an abject surrender of the entire hostile band, which was,

<sup>2</sup> *Autobiography*, pp. 99, 100.

264 instead, ruthlessly butchered; while the sending out of the Sioux upon the trail of the few worn-out fugitives, in the very country beyond the great river which they had been persistently ordered to occupy, capped the climax of a bloody and costly contest, characterized on our part by heartlessness, bad faith, and gross mismanagement.

It is generally stated in the published histories of those commonwealths, that the defeat of Black Hawk opened to settlement northern Illinois and the southern portion of what is now Wisconsin. Unqualified, this statement is misleading. Doubtless the war proved a powerful agent in the original development of this section, but the end was accomplished indirectly. As we have seen, the British band was in itself no obstacle to legitimate settlement, the frontiers of which were far removed from Black Hawk's village, and need not have

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crowded it for some years to come. Although the natural outgrowth of the excitable condition of affairs on the border, the war was not essential as a means of clearing the path of civilization. What it did accomplish in the way of territorial development, was to call national attention, in a marked manner, to the attractions and resources of an important section of the Northwest. The troops acted as explorers of a large tract of which nothing had hitherto been definitely known among white men. The Sacs themselves were, previous to their invasion, unacquainted with the Rock river valley above the mouth of the Kishwaukee, and had but vague notions of its swamps and lakes, gathered from their Winnebago guides, who alone were fairly well informed on the subject. From Wisconsin Heights to the Bad Axe, every foot of the trackless way was as unknown to the Sacs and their pursuers as the interior of Africa was to Stanley when he first groped his way across the Dark Continent. During and immediately following the war, the newspapers of the eastern states were filled with descriptions, more or less florid, of the scenic charms of, and the possibilities for, extractive industries in the Rock river valley, the groves and prairies on every hand, the park-like region of the Four lakes, the Wisconsin-river highlands, and the picturesque mountains and almost 265 impenetrable forests of western Wisconsin. Books and pamphlets were issued from the press by the score, giving sketches of the war and accounts of the newly-discovered paradise: crude publications, abounding, as a rule, in gross narrative and descriptive errors, and to-day practically unknown except to historical specialists. But they did the work, in their own way and season, of thoroughly advertising the country, and at once attracted a tide of immigration thither. There necessarily followed, in due time, the opening to sale of public lands heretofore reserved, and the purchase of what territory remained in the possession of the Indian tribes of the district. Again, the decisive result of the war completely humbled the spirit of the mischief-making Winnebagoes, so that they never resumed their arrogant tone, and were quite content to allow the affair to remain the last of the Indian uprisings in either Illinois or Wisconsin. This incidental crushing of the Winnebagoes, and the broad and liberal advertising given to the theatre of disturbance, were therefore the two practical and

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immediate results of the Black Hawk War, the consequence of which was at once to give an enormous impetus to the development of Wisconsin Territory.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Erected in 1836.